



MEMORANDUM OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

TO: Honorable Chairperson and Members DATE: October 16, 2002
Board of County Commissioners

SUBJECT: Center for Democracy

FROM: Alex Penelas
Mayor

As you know, the Board of County Commissioners, in a 6-5 decision, voted yesterday to approve a plan calling for outside monitoring of the November 5th election by the Center for Democracy. Given the time sensitivity of this matter, I am stating my position on this issue today in order to move forward without delay with the preparations for the general election.

I have stated publicly over the past several weeks, including on September 10th, that I welcome outside monitors and observers to view our electoral process here in Miami-Dade County as we prepare for the general election. I have consistently stated that outside observers should be welcomed in our community because I firmly believe that we have nothing to hide. I continue to believe, however, that compensating an external monitor with taxpayer dollars to review and validate our election calls into question the objectivity of such a review. I would have no objection to any outside monitors who wished to review the manner in which the November 5th contest is conducted who would be willing to do so at no cost to the County. As the recent letter from Mr. Alan Weinstein explains, the Center for Democracy is normally compensated for their election oversight work by an independent third party, such as the U.S.A.I.D., not by the government whose processes are being evaluated by the Center. Thus, Miami-Dade's proposed arrangement with the Center would be a unique one wherein the subject of the election review is paying to be reviewed.

Moreover, I would emphasize that the Center's ability to affect the preparations for the November 5th election and ensure its success is limited. Instead, the success of this election will be directly attributable to the hard work and commitment of countless County employees who have been called on to serve in an elections-related capacity. The solutions to the problems encountered September 10th are being put in place as a result of the oversight and leadership of the Board of County Commissioners, the review conducted by the Inspector General and the County Manager's mobilization of vast County resources under the leadership of Project Manager Carlos Alvarez. Further, I feel that there are community resources at our disposal, such as the community leaders that I mentioned on September 10th, who could serve in this role with various other local institutions and community groups.

Despite these concerns, I have decided, in the spirit of community unity and in deference to the will of a majority of Commissioners who believe that the Center's involvement will help resolve our past election problems and instill confidence in our electorate, not to exercise my veto authority on this matter.

cc: Honorable Katherine Fernandez-Rundle, State Attorney
Honorable Bennett Brummer, Public Defender
Honorable Joseph Farina, Chief Judge
Steve Shiver, County Manager
Robert Ginsburg, County Attorney